



Child Support Recovery Unit

Public Affairs Contact: Roger Munns (515) 281-4848 E-mail rmunns@dhs.state.ia.us

Purpose

The purpose of the Child Support Recovery Unit is to assist custodial parents in receiving court-ordered child support payments and to assist in determining paternity in non-marital births. Recoveries also assist taxpayers by helping to reimburse government costs for custodial parents who receive public assistance.

Who

The CSRU serves people who are receiving public assistance, who received public assistance in the past, who live in other states but need services from Iowa because the non-custodial parent lives or works here, and people who have never received public assistance when they apply for the state's help and pay a \$25 application fee.

The caseload has grown sharply, from 157,000 in SFY98 to 194,542 cases in SFY08. Those cases represent about 684,788 parents and children. Of those cases:

- 10 percent are currently receiving public assistance benefits.
- 33 percent never received public assistance and paid a one time \$25 application fee.
- 57 percent formerly received benefits.

What

- In SFY 2008, about 75 percent of collections came from income withholding. The CSRU has established a one-stop call center for employers called the Employers Partnering in Child Support (EPICS). A secure website allows employers to electronically transfer funds making it easier to comply with income withholding orders they receive.
- Another highly effective and cost-efficient enforcement method is to capture state and federal tax refunds before they go to parents who owe child support.
- Other collection methods include license sanction, intercept of insurance payments, property liens, contempt of court, passport sanction, and credit bureau reporting.
- CSRU incorporated a statewide practice of focusing on customer service while establishing and modifying orders by using a customer-friendly "Connections Equals Collections" approach.

How are We Doing?

- Iowa is the first state to establish a joint office with another state, Nebraska, to process cases that the states have in common. A second joint office, with Illinois, opened shortly after.
- CSRU implemented an Alternative to Contempt program that diverts severely non-compliant non-custodial parents away from serving time in jail and into a comprehensive case management system to identify and remove barriers to paying child support.
- CSRU launched a secure web site enabling employers to electronically send withheld wages and to report hires/discharges. More than 11,000 employers are signed up, and employers have sent over \$98.3M since inception in 2005.
- In federal fiscal year 2006 (audited data), Iowa had the tenth highest percent of cases with a court order, 85.87 percent. Paternity and child support court orders are the legal basis needed before child support can be collected.
- Iowa collected \$345 million in child support in SFY08, nearly double the \$174.5 collected in SFY97.
- The cost-effectiveness ratio is \$5.75 collected in child support for every \$1.00 spent.